

Ontario Schools Expanding Student Nutrition Programs

October 2, 2013 - Toronto, ON: The Ministry of Child and Youth Services announced yesterday the expansion of Student Nutrition Programs in Ontario. These programs have been shown to ‘influence overall student health and improve learning and behavioral outcomes’. Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) agrees with this expansion of Student Nutrition Programs and the action the government is taking to provide kids a healthy start.

Yesterday’s announcement revealed that the province will be providing more children with nutritious meals at school through an additional \$3 million investment into Ontario’s Student Nutrition Programs to support breakfast and morning meal programs. These programs have been shown to positively influence student’s overall health. This commitment is well aligned with OPHA’s *Strategic Actions to Address Childhood Obesity* developed by the Collaborative Chronic Disease Prevention Work Group, where it was identified that creating supportive school environments will promote healthy behaviours as a key component in the strategy to address childhood obesity. Schools are an ideal setting to promote healthy eating and a place to provide foods of maximum nutritional value.

While OPHA is delighted with the investment in Student Nutrition Programs, this is only one piece of a complete strategy that must be implemented to achieve a comprehensive school health approach. OPHA encourages the government to consider Nutrition Tools for Schools (NTS), a program that provides ‘how-to guidance for achieving healthy school nutrition environments’. The program was advanced in the OPHA strategy. The NTS framework considers all aspects of the school community and utilizes education and community partnerships to promote consistent messages about healthy eating, with nutrition standards that meet or exceed PPM 150.

“OPHA is pleased that the government has taken this step to providing a more health promoting environment in schools” says Siu Mee Cheng, Executive Director of OPHA. “Future efforts will need to consider a more comprehensive approach to healthy eating and nutrition in the school setting”.

About OPHA

The Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA) is a not-for-profit member-based association that provides leadership in advancing public health in Ontario. Our Association represents six public and community health disciplines and our membership represents many public health and community health professionals from Ontario. Collectively, we represent over 10,000 public and community health professionals in the province. OPHA also operates the Nutrition Resource Centre, a health promotion centre for health professionals in Ontario.

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Media Contact:

Dusty Stevenson, Dietetic Intern
Ontario Public Health Association
E: intern@opha.on.ca